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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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AF/S: HTREGER
NSC: CCOURVILLE

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TAGS: [KCRM](#) [CKOR](#) [PGOV](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE: FIVE ESCAPE FROM MAPUTO POLICE
COMMAND; WAS ANIBALZINHO TO HAVE FLED TOO?

¶1. (U) On November 26 five prisoners, including a suspect in the October 21 murder of then-Director of the Maputo Central Prison Jorge Microsse (ref A), escaped from high-security holding cells at the Maputo City Police Command, according to media sources. On November 30 independent daily fax news sheet "MediaFAX" reported that the breakout was part of an unsuccessful operation to free Anibal dos Santos Junior (Anibalzinho), the man convicted of leading the group responsible for the November 2000 murder of Mozambique's foremost investigative journalist, Carlos Cardoso. In 2003 Anibalzinho was tried and convicted in absentia for his role in the Cardoso murder; he had escaped from Maputo's Maximum Security Prison and was at large at the time of the trial. Captured and returned to jail, in May 2004 Anibalzinho made a second escape from the same maximum security facility. He was eventually arrested in Canada and deported back to Mozambique in January 2005 (ref B). Since then he has been held at the Maputo City Police Command, considered a more secure facility, awaiting a retrial (the Supreme Court overruled the in absentia conviction on a technicality). This alleged escape attempt occurred just days before the December 1 start of Anibalzinho's retrial.

¶2. (SBU) A police communique issued on November 30 confirmed the escape of the five prisoners, but claimed the incident occurred in the early morning hours of November 28, and made no mention of any attempt to free Anibalzinho. In a December 1 meeting with Emboffs, the police stated that several police and prison guards had been detained in connection with the escape of the five prisoners and denied any connection between the escape and a wider operation to free Anibalzinho. In a follow-up conversation with MediaFAX' editor, the daily continued to back its story, claiming that well-placed police and Ministry of Interior contacts are certain that Anibalzinho was to have been freed also. The sources indicated that the operation was carefully planned and involved payoffs to prison guards for their complicity. The escape apparently was foiled by a new prison guard not in on the plot.

¶3. (U) On November 29 Minister of Interior Pacheco acknowledged on television that there are significant weaknesses in the state of security at Maputo's Maximum Security Prison and the City Police Command. On December 1 he convened a high-level meeting with police

commanders to discuss internal security strategies and the fight against corruption within the police force.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: MediaFax is considered one of the most reliable of the independent journals. Another escape by Anibalzinho, just before his trial, would have greatly embarrassed the Guebuza government. That said, analysts we have talked with doubt his retrial will produce any significant revelations beyond what emerged in 2003. The successful escape of five prisoners from the most secure facility in the country compounds growing unease over rising crime and the ineffectiveness of the Mozambican police force.

LA LIME